



Submission on Behalf of Connecticut Chapter of National Physicians Alliance to the Public Safety and Security Committee, March 14, 2013, Hartford, CT

My name is Julie Rosenbaum. I am a primary care physician who practices in Waterbury, Connecticut and teaches with the Yale University Primary Care Internal Medicine Residency. I am a member of the Steering Committee of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Physicians Alliance. Founded in 2005, the National Physicians Alliance represents over 20,000 civically engaged physicians throughout the United States committed to advancing the core values of the medical profession: service, integrity, and advocacy. In Connecticut we have over 350 members and include internists, pediatricians, family physicians, anesthesiologists, gynecologists, and obstetricians, among others. The NPA strictly refuses financial entanglements with the pharmaceutical, medical device, or health insurance industries. Personally, I have practiced in Connecticut for 13 years with the majority of my practice focused on primary care internal medicine. I speak today on behalf of myself, my patients, and the National Physicians Alliance. I do not represent Yale University School of Medicine.

Our role as physicians is to protect and heal our patients. One of our central responsibilities is to “do not harm” and try to protect our patients, realizing that our patients cannot achieve and maintain health with medicines alone. In our everyday practices we diagnose and treat illness, but we also screen for and talk to patients about factors that might increase their risk of harm, whether this is lack of exercise, smoking, substance abuse, or guns at home.

The effects of gun violence permeate each day of medical practice. Sometimes I may be struggling to help my young patient who was left paralyzed and in a wheelchair by a bullet, struck while walking on the street a decade ago. At other points I try to help another patient who

is struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder after witnessing a murder by gun fire when he was a teenager. This patient is paralyzed not physically, but by the emotional effects of his experiences with gun violence.

Gun violence is a true and powerful cause of injury and death across the US, accounting for over 31,000 deaths per year. If we frame this problem as a public health issue, similar to smoking or injury from car accidents, we can find ways to reduce harm from gun-related violence. Public health principles have decreased smoking and increased car safety standards and seat belt use. Both have decreased unnecessary deaths, and we can and must do the same for gun violence.

As physicians, we urge you to carefully consider the options of how to reduce gun-related death. When a person wants to hurt someone else, having a gun nearby increases the risk of death substantially. An estimated 41 percent of gun-related homicides would not occur if no guns were present. Even more notably, suicide is mostly an impulsive act. Ninety-four percent of gun-related suicides would not occur if no guns were present. We favor common sense regulation to keep the most dangerous of weapons out of the hands of criminals or those with concerning mental health conditions. We support the proposed legislation of Connecticut Against Gun Violence, including the following recommendations:

- Strengthens our assault weapons ban; ban possession and sale.
- Ban large capacity ammunition magazines of more than 10 rounds.
- Universal background checks on ALL sales and transfers, including private sales, including long guns. These should include broader categories than the previous versions, including those with records of domestic violence, unlawful drug use, and convicted felons.
- Require registration of handguns with annual renewal and annual fee. Require safety inspection every three years. Charge a fee on initial registration and renewal.
- Increase penalties for storage/safety violations. Violation would be a Class D felony.
- Require permits/license to purchase and carry all guns, and to purchase ammunition.
- Restrict handgun sales to one gun/month.

We urge you to consider these issues carefully but quickly. Please keep in mind that every day in the US 8 children die from gun violence. Every day. Several of the recommendations above are supported by the majority of Americans. Many are supported by the majority of gun owners in the US. The time to act is now.

Respectfully,

Julie R. Rosenbaum MD

On behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Physicians Alliance